Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection

The text of this book remains unchanged from the original published version. It should be noted that some comments or words in this edition might be culturally insensitive to certain readers. Views and words of the author or authors are theirs alone and not of the Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library. Certain words or slang used in the past had different cultural meanings at the time and might not mean the same thing today.

Publishing and spelling errors remain unchanged from the original versions. All text images were reproduced exactly without changes to the existing material.

M2347

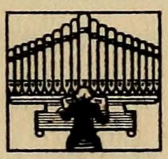
LINCOLN'S MARRIAGE

Newspaper Interview

with

MRS. FRANCES WALLACE

Springfield, Illinois



SEPTEMBER 2, 1895

75 Copies

Privately Printed, 1917

H. E. Barker

MRS. FRANCES WALLACE

Sister of Mrs. Lincoln Talks of Domestic Matters

Says There is No Truth in the Statements That Lincoln's Home Life Was Unhappy

One of the most interesting interviews about Lincoln ever published was that obtained with Mrs. Frances Wallace of Springfield, Ill., a sister of Mrs. Lincoln. This interview is regarded as having especial value because it is opposed to previous publications to the effect that Lincoln's home life was unhappy. Here is the way the newspaper man says Mrs. Wallace told her story:

"I came here in 1837 to visit my married sister, Mrs. Ninian Edwards. Her given name was Elizabeth. Both she and her husband are now dead. My father had quite a large family at home in Lexington, Ky., and Lizzie wanted me to stay with her. She said she needed me more than they did at home, and so I stayed here.

"I often heard Mr. Edwards speak of Mr. Lincoln, and one time I told him: 'You are always talking of this Mr. Lincoln. I wish you would bring him down some time and let me see him.' So Mr. Edwards had him come down, and that is the way I met him. Yes, he took me out once or twice, but he was not much for society. He would go where they took him, but he was never very much for company. I don't think he could be called bashful. He was never embarrassed, that I saw, and he seemed to enjoy ladies' company. But he did not go much, as some of the other young men did.

"He liked music, although in all my life I never heard him attempt to sing. No, I never heard him whistle, that I can remember. I don't know whether he could or not. But he liked to hear the piano, and he liked to hear us sing. My sister had a good piano. Mr. Edwards was quite prosperous and lived in very good style. My sister liked society, and gave a good many parties, considering that early day.

"I got acquainted with Mr. Wallace. He had come out from Pennsylvania, and he had some money, and he had been out in Iowa speculating. He stopped here on his way back and speculated some in property here. And then the Pennsylvania men wanted him to locate here, and so he did. And he and I kept company quite a while, and then we were married. My sister, Mrs. Edwards, gave us quite a big wedding. I was married in a white satin dress, I remember, and the invitations were printed, and it was quite an affair.

"At first we boarded for about a year, and then we went to keeping house. Mr. Wallace had opened a drug store. He didn't intend to practice medicine at first, but his friends wanted him to, and so he got to going out among their families, and so he got into the practice. And after we were married my sister Mary came out from Lexington to stay with Mrs. Edwards, just the same as I had done before I was married. And she staid there only a little while till she and Mr. Lincoln got acquainted. And a year after I was married, they were married. They were married in 1842, Nov. 4th.

"No, they didn't have a big wedding at all. As soon as Mrs. Edwards knew they were engaged, she wanted to give them a big wedding just the same as she had me, but they were both opposed to it. They both wanted a simple, private wedding. So they wouldn't tell any one when they were to be married. They just went along together, and then one Sunday morning Mr. Lincoln came down to Mr. Edwards' house, and he and Mary were out on the front porch, and then they told Mrs. Edwards that they were going to be married that night.

"She was terribly disappointed, for she could not get up a dinner in that short time. It was Sunday, and Springfield was a very small town at the time, and she hardly knew what to do. But they would not have it any other way, so she wrote a note to me, and told me they were to be married that night, and asked me if I could help her. So I worked all day. I never worked harder all day in my life. And in the evening they were married, and we had a very nice little supper, but not what we would have had if they had given Mrs. Edwards time.

"Only a few people were there, for there was no time to prepare for a large company. I remember the minister, Mr. Dresser, did not know of the ceremony in time to announce to his morning congregation that there would be no service in the evening, so he had to go down there to the church in the evening and hold a short service, and then come up to Mr. Edwards' house and marry them. Mr. Herndon says in his history that the wedding was a grand affair, and that there were several hundred invitations printed, and that some one stood up with Mr. Lincoln, and that Mrs. Lincoln wore a white silk dress, but I know she never had a white silk dress in her life till she went to Washington to live.

"After I was married I gave her my white satin dress and told her to wear it till it got soiled, but then to give it back to me, for I wanted to keep all things like that—my wedding dress, you know. No, she was not married in the white satin. It was too soiled. She may have been married in a white swiss muslin, but I think it was not a white dress at all. I think it was delaine, or something of that kind.

"After that they boarded a while, and then they went to housekeeping. I don't see why people should say Mr. Lincoln's home life was not happy, for I certainly never saw a thing there that would make me think either of them was unhappy. He was devoted to his home, and Mrs. Lincoln thought everything of him. She almost worshiped him. Why, she need not have married him if she had not wanted to. She could have married Mr. Douglas, I have no doubt. She had

gone with Mr. Douglas to several places. They were very well acquainted, and were very good friends.

"And Mr. Lincoln was not compelled to marry Mary. He had become quite a promising young man, and we were all proud of him. He could have married any other girl, no doubt, if he had wanted to. But they did not lead an unhappy life at all. Why, she was devoted to him and to her children. And he was certainly all to her that any husband could have been.

"He was the most tender hearted man I ever knew. I have seen him carry Tad half way to the office, when Tad was a great big boy. And I said to him once: 'Why, Mr. Lincoln, put down that great big boy. He's big enough to walk.' And he said: 'Oh, don't you think his little feet get too tired?' "

Tears were standing in the kindly little old lady's eyes as she told of this incident. Her whole manner was so simple and unaffected; she seemed so really to be living those distant scenes; her white hair and her gentle manner so plainly marked her the lady that it was like a benison to sit by her, and hear the truthful tongue run on.

"They say that he had an affair with a young woman at Salem, and that he broke off one wedding with Mary because he was half distracted with love for his other girl. But he did not break off one wedding. The wedding I tell you about was the only wedding that was arranged. I would have known of it if there had been another. And there never was another. He may have offered himself to that other girl. I don't know anything about that. He and Mary may have had a lover's quarrel for all I know. But I certainly saw him the night he was maried, and he was not distracted with grief, or anything else. He was cheerful as he ever had been, for all we could see. He acted just as he always had in company. No; no one stood up with him. Just he and Mary stood up alone, and Mr. Dresser married them.

"No one but members of the family were there, or almost none. As I remember it there was Mr. and Mrs. Ninian Ed-

wards, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Edwards, Major Stuart and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Dresser, Dr. Todd's family, and Mr. Wallace and myself. I don't think there was anyone else there. There couldn't have been more than one or two more.

"And then they say that Mrs. Lincoln was an ambitious woman. But she was not an ambitious woman at all. She was devoted to her home. She was one of the best seamstresses I ever knew. She made all her clothes and her children's clothes; and they were better made than most anyone else's. It was before the day of sewing machines, you know, and all her work had to be done by hand. And they always looked well.

"After Mr. Lincoln was elected President, he appointed Dr. Wallace a paymaster in the regular army, and stationed him first at Washington, but that was so far away from home that he asked to be removed to St. Louis, and so he was moved there. And he could come up and see us when he wanted to. He retained the office till his death.

"No, it was as I tell you. There never was but one wedding arranged between Mary and Mr. Lincoln, and that was the time they were married. And they certainly did live happily together—as much so as any man and woman I have ever known."

71.2009.084.05440

Images Processed by Gary Brin
Copyright © Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection

Nancy Hanks Lincoln Public Library

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN PUBLIC LIBRARY
Historical Book Collection